Snow Geese at Bosque del Apache -FM

Next Meeting – March 14
Room 249, Peirce Science Center
Social at 7:00 p.m. - Program begins at 7:30 p.m.

Scott Stoleson –
Birds of New Mexico

At our March meeting, we will welcome Scott H. Stoleson, a Research Wildlife Biologist with the Forest Service’s Northeastern Research Station in Warren, PA. In Scott’s talk, he will share some of the reasons why a formerly hard-core New Englander fell in love with New Mexico.

Scott received a B.A. in Biological Sciences from Dartmouth College, and a Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology from Yale University. Before moving to Pennsylvania in 2002, Scott was a Research Wildlife Biologist with the Forest Service’s Rocky Mountain Research Station in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he studied endangered birds of desert riparian woodlands.

(continued on p. 2)

Field Trips
by Ron Montgomery

Our spring field trips are listed below. I have interspersed some other scheduled events to illustrate that we have a lot going on during April and May.

Sat, April 2    Presque Isle
Sat, April 9    Conneaut Marsh & Pymatuning
April 21 – 23   National Wildlife Week at the Mall
Mon, April 25   Oil Creek State Park
May 9 –16      Birdathon
Sat, May 14     Mt Zion & Airy (Grassland Birds)
May 20 –22     PSO meeting (SRAS Hosting)
Mon, June 20    Atlas Block Busting

Many of you also participate in the North American Migration Count in early May. This year it will be on May 14, the same day as our Grassland Field Trip, so we may combine both activities.

Saturday April 2; Presque Isle. We will meet inside Presque Isle Park in Erie at 9:00AM (it is 100 miles and 2 hours from Clarion by way of Custards, Rt 79, Rt 20 and Peninsula Drive). Our meeting place is a large parking lot on the right about a mile inside the Park. It is the first obvious place to scope the Lake. We will have lunch in a restaurant and bird until late afternoon, but folks can leave anytime they
wish. Let me know if you would like to stay in Erie Friday night and want a motel recommendation.

Saturday April 9; Conneaut Marsh. We will meet and begin this outing at the spillway bridge at Custards, off Route 285, at 8:30AM. We will eat lunch in a restaurant, but you will be home in time for dinner.

Birds of New Mexico, continued from p. 1

While in New Mexico -- his wife's home state -- Scott was a member of the state Bird Records Committee, Important Bird Areas Committee, active in state and regional Partners in Flight groups, and ate a lot of green chili.

His current research focuses on evaluating the impacts of land management on the distribution, abundance, and demography of vertebrate populations, especially for species of special concern (such as the Cerulean Warbler) on the Allegheny Plateau. Scott has also conducted research on avian biology and conservation in the western U.S. (including running Hawkwatch International site in Utah for ex-PA Auduboner Steve Hoffman), as well as Mexico, Costa Rica, Venezuela, and Ecuador. He has led natural history tours to the Caribbean and Latin America. Join us for what promises to be an exciting program!

Adopting a Block

I am now the proud parent of block 44C41. It's quite beautiful with the Clarion River running through it. I adopted it because a tiny section of it is where I walk daily with my golden retriever, Bridget. I remember seeing Prairie Warblers there last year. These warblers are on Audubon's Watch List and I want to be sure to confirm them in my block.

The process of adopting was fun and easy. I first went to the source of all good bird information, [www.senecarocksaudubon.org](http://www.senecarocksaudubon.org)! I clicked on Bird Counts and found the Breeding Bird Atlas Project. The web site that took me to the adoption center is [http://bird.atlasing.org/PA/](http://bird.atlasing.org/PA/). In a short period of time I registered and chose the block from a map. On that site I can even get in touch with my coordinator, Mike Leahy.

I was curious about my block's background so I clicked on Block Results from 1984-1989 and printed a neat listing of all the birds found there. That list will be helpful while I watch for species as they enter the "safe" dates. I printed out a gorgeous picture with 44C41's topographical characteristics. I plan to carry this photo wherever I go. When you see me, ask to see it, it's beautiful!

My proudest moment was successfully receiving a confirmation e-mail from Mike that I had officially adopted 44C41. There are so many other blocks just waiting to be adopted and a growing support net of people with experience to help new block parents. Check out a block where you live or enjoy driving, hiking or hunting. By adopting a block you'll discover new features of the area and contribute to the important work of this second atlas.
White-breasted Nuthatch - FM

**TAKE THE NEXT STEP!**
by Margaret Buckwalter

Want to know why that nuthatch is crouched waving its wings at a peaceable neighbor? Why are those ducks chasing each other all over the place? What does that loud honking of geese mean? Behavior at feeders and out in the field is often curious and mysterious. Here’s help.

The 3-volume set of *A Guide to Bird Behavior*, by Don and Lillian Stokes, published by Little, Brown and Co., various dates, must be the cheapest, but most valuable, addition birders can make to their own libraries. At amazon.com all three volumes are available for as little as $3 apiece, used. They are valuable because the reference set covers 75 species of birds, most of them familiar, and describes their social behavior. Observing this behavior is really the next step beyond merely identifying birds, so it’s a logical step for beginners. Beyond that, expert birders can use these insights for understanding behavior in breeding bird atlas studies. One breeding behavior description may be just the clue you need to upgrade your evaluation of “Probable” to “Confirmed” in a certain species.

Since each volume covers just 25 birds, it’s necessary to buy all three for the complete set. To remedy the one fault I find with this set, it’s well worth the trouble to make your personal index to the set because the species are in random order. That’s a small price to pay for such a wealth of information.

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**Birdathon 2005**
by Janice Horn

At our most recent Board meeting we scheduled this year’s Birdathon for Mon., May 9th to Mon., May 16th. Each participant may choose any 24 hour period during those days. Our receipts will go to education projects including possible projects at SGL 330 (Piney Tract/Mt. Zion), and a contribution to Audubon Pennsylvania.

I have the supplies that you can use for your Birdathon plans, pledge/contribution forms, Birdathon report forms, bumper stickers, etc. For those who are traditional Birdathoners I’ll have packets ready for you at the next 2 program meetings. For anyone who wants to join us for the first time or anyone who will participate and doesn’t plan to be at either of those meetings, get in touch with me for the materials you need.

Janice Horn (226-7367, jhhorn35@yahoo.com)

**Christmas Bird Count – Correction**

There were 3 Bald Eagles on our CBC. Two were seen by Dale Luthringer in Game Lands 72, plus one by Harvey Ganoe. Due to a misunderstanding, 2 were omitted from the final report. At this point our report is in the hands of the Regional Editor and we hope he can change the final figures for the official record. These were the first Bald Eagles in the history of our Clarion Count! Please accept our apologies for the misunderstanding.

PGC to Purchase Piney Tract!
(from a PGC press release)

HARRISBURG - The Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners today (Jan. 27, 2005) approved four land transactions that will increase the State Game Lands system by nearly 1,150 acres, including the creation of a new SGL in Clarion County.

"Conservation-minded individuals have helped the Game Commission stretch its limited dollars and leave a legacy for all Pennsylvanians to admire," Ross said.

CLARION COUNTY: The Board approved the purchase of a nearly 965-acre parcel of land in Piney Township that will be designated SGL 330 - the newest SGL in the agency's system - from the Alliance for Wetlands and Wildlife for $289,500. Commonly known as the "Piney Tract," this parcel is a remarkable area of grasslands and scattered woods that has long been recognized as an important habitat for wildlife. The property was mined for coal several times beginning during World War I, resulting in a diversity of topographic features. The most recent activity was reclamation and revegetation work in 1979. Much of the area was reclaimed into gently rolling hills planted with various grasses.

"The Piney Tract is significant because of the large populations of grassland-associated birds and the diversity of species that have occupied this area for many years," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "In addition to the various game species - such as ring-necked pheasants, rabbits, ruffed grouse and wild turkey - that use this property, there are a number of species of special concern that can be found on this same tract."

As an example, Dan Brauning, Game Commission Wildlife Diversity Section supervisor, noted that the Henslow's sparrow - a nationally rare bird that is classified as endangered or threatened in most states in which it occurs - can be found in the hundreds on the Piney Tract.

"This probably represents the largest concentration of this species in the state," Brauning said. "Other state endangered and threatened species, such as the short-eared owl, upland sandpiper and northern harrier, can be found on Piney Tract."

Additionally, Brauning noted that grassland habitats have been under siege, but reclaimed minelands in Pennsylvania and across the country are refuges for viable populations of game and nongame species. The Piney Tract stands out among reclaimed mine lands because of its size, which helps reduce the impact of forest-edge predators enabling birds to sustain substantial local populations. Few reclaimed areas have such extensive fields, or support the diversity or densities of grassland species as does the Piney Tract.

National Wildlife Week
April 21, 22, 23
by Deb Freed

This will be the 24th year of celebrating National Wildlife Week at the Clarion Mall. The Clarion County Federation of Sportsmen sponsors the three day event where dozens of organizations, agencies and businesses set up displays.

Seneca Rocks Audubon has been a participant for many years. Our display attracts families who feed the birds and individuals who want help identifying birds. We typically have a variety of bird information and items for sale like our bluebird boxes and birding trail guides. Members staff the display in two hour shifts. Comfortable chairs are provided! Please see the sign-up at the March meeting or call Deb Freed at 226-4719 to see how you can help.
Bluebird Conference
Held in Western PA

BLUEBIRDS STEAL THE SHOW AT THE BLUEBIRD SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA’S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Dr. Scott Shalaway, author, biologist, and talk show host, and other well-known naturalists were on hand at the seventh Annual Conference of the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania (BSP). The event was held on March 4 and 5 in Oakdale, PA.

In the 1900s, Eastern bluebird populations plummeted by 90 percent throughout their range, and were absent from many areas in Pennsylvania. The bluebird uses cavities in dead and dying trees for nesting, but this habitat was, and still is, commonly destroyed by human activities such as urban development and the reverting of abandoned farmland. In the late 60s and 70s, a grassroots effort rose up nationwide to erect and monitor artificial nesting boxes along what are called bluebird trails. These volunteer-driven trails have helped bring bluebirds back to the fields of Pennsylvania.

The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania (BSP) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of the eastern bluebird in Pennsylvania. As an affiliate of the North American Bluebird Society, the BSP has experienced the most rapid growth of any state affiliate, with a membership of over 1,200 individuals. The BSPs website at http://www.thebsp.org/ and quarterly newsletter serve as a clearinghouse for bluebird information, such as nest box designs and monitoring information. The BSP has an extensive county coordinator network to provide expertise and outreach to communities and youth.

Forest Landowners Conference

Saturday, March 12, 2005, 8 am - 3:30 pm
Chandler Dining Hall
Clarion University

$20 registration fee includes lunch and materials.

Topics and presenters include:
- Oil & Gas Leasing, Matt Wolford, Environmental and Natural Resource Attorney
- Local Woodland Owner Associations, Dennis Waldorf, Tree Farmer
- Selling Timber vs. Marketing Timber, John Portzline, Service Forester, Clarion County
- American Chestnut Past/Present/Future, Dave Armstrong, Executive Director, PA TACF
- Forest Health Update, Norm Kauffman, Entomologist, PA Bureau of Forestry
- Habitat Management-Assisting the Private Landowner, Tim Hoppe, PA Game Commission Biologist

Please make checks payable to Extension Special and mail with Name, Address and Phone No. before Friday, March 4, 2005, to:
Clarion County Extension Office
8 Grant Street
Clarion, PA 16214

Call 814-223-9028 for more info.
This event is not affiliated with Clarion University.

Welcome Jim Wilson,
SRAS Events Coordinator

Jim Wilson has joined the board to assist with special events. He will begin with our Timberwolf celebration May 9 and our display at the PSO annual meeting May 20 & 21.
Presque Isle Audubon Workshop -

**Understanding the Impacts of Chemicals on our Environment**

SATURDAY, MARCH 12, 2005

PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY AT ERIE: THE BEHREND CAMPUS

REED UNION BUILDING 8:30am-5pm

Most of us choose to live a healthy lifestyle which includes both our indoor and outdoor environments. Putting together the components to make this happen are not complex.....especially, when you have an Audubon workshop to show you the way. We will share with you how to landscape and enjoy a natural ecosystem at home and work. We will address at-home composting and grasscycling! Have you been wondering about the impact of chemicals on garden bees, dragonflies, birds, and aquatic life? Interested in organic food, farming, and landscaping? We’ll share what the “Great Lakes restoration” is and how it impacts YOU. Our expert guest speakers will share their knowledge and answer your questions during the morning and afternoon workshops with exciting and educational exhibits on these topics.

The fifteen Workshop presenters include biology professors as well as other experts in organic horticulture.

**REGISTRATION:** $20.00
**STUDENT:** $15.00 must show ID on March 12

To register, please make check payable to **Presque Isle Audubon Society** and send Name, Address and Phone No. with payment to:

PRESQUE ISLE AUDUBÓN SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1783
ERIE, PA 16507

Questions: 899-2572 or jrplkm@aol.com or http://www.presqueisle.org/audubon/

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**Minnesota Rare Bird Alert**

An interesting report from the Minnesota Rare Bird Alert of 2/24/05, sponsored by the Minnesota Ornithologists' Union, Minnesota’s oldest and largest birding club –

GREAT GRAY OWLS and NORTHERN HAWK OWLS are still easy to find across northern Minnesota, and northern Aitkin County appears to be the best place to look. Many observers report finding multiple Great Grays along Aitkin County Roads 1, 4, 5, and 22, and along state highway 65. A BOREAL OWL has been reported along the highway 61 expressway between Duluth and Two Harbors this week. Check southwest of Berquist Road on the north side of the highway.

Editor’s note – click here for a Great photo - http://biosci.umn.edu/~mou/

**Townsend’s Solitaire in Pennsylvania**

According to Birds of Pennsylvania, published in 2000 and written by Daniel Brauning and Jerry McWilliams, the Townsend's Solitaire breeds from Southern Alaska south in the Rocky Mountain region to New Mexico. They winter over their entire breeding range in the U.S. and east to North Dakota, Missouri, and Texas. Solitaires sometimes wander great distances and are casual as far east as Newfoundland... There are five accepted records in Pennsylvania, all since 1986.

On Jan. 15, 2005 John Fedak reported to the PABIRDS listserv that Len Groshek had found a Townsend’s Solitaire in Gamelands 30 near Betula in McKean County. The bird has been wintering there, in the hawthornes. According to John, over 80 birders have seen it so far, and as we go to press, it is still there. To look for it, take Rt 46 south out of Smethport, thru Betula until you get into the gamelands and cross Potato Creek. Park to the west (right) and go through the gate on foot until it turns 90 degrees and has a branch to the right. You'll see a bat house near that intersection. Total walking distance about 100 yards.
Roger Tory Peterson Institute Files Complaint Against Estate and Trust of Virginia Peterson

A letter from James Berry, President of RTPI, requesting that our membership be informed of a situation, reads in part:

Many of you have followed the development of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History (RTPI) since its founding in 1984. The expressed intent of Roger was to create a public institution equipped to house his life’s work of art, photography, writings, collections and other creative effects and to make them available for nature education purposes. At this time we feel it is important to inform you of a situation that has unfortunately developed that has put Roger’s wishes in jeopardy.

From a press release of 2/5/05-

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History (RTPI), a private nonprofit organization located in Jamestown, New York, claims that promises as well as an agreement it made with Roger and Virginia Peterson in 1993 were breached by Virginia Peterson and her estate.

Dr. Peterson’s promise to pledge, affirmed in the 1993 agreement, stated that the life work of the famed American naturalist who died in 1996 would be donated to RTPI and be kept at this one location for educational purposes.

RTPI raised millions of dollars to construct a state-of-the-art museum to house art and artifacts in perpetuity, hired professional staff to operate the facility, and made many other commitments based upon these promises and agreement.

However, Virginia Peterson has sent only a part of the collection, retaining a significant portion for herself and her heirs.

The complaint filed by RTPI was done to secure the items previously promised by Dr. Peterson and set forth in the 1993 agreement.

If the court allows, we’d like to show them letters of support for preserving Roger’s life work for present and future generations. If you are amiable to the idea, please write to me at the below address. Thank you.

James M. Berry, President, RTPI
311 Curtis Street
Jamestown, NY 14701-9620

Please see the website www.rtpi.org or call 716/665-2473 for more information.

From SRAS “auxiliary” member, Roger Horn –

“Pileated”, I am somewhat taken aback to tell you, means no more than having a cap, ie, a pileus. One of our dictionaries says under “pileus” – “in classical antiquity, a brimless felt cap; the cap of a mushroom; the pileum”. And so a woodpecker lacking a pileus would be pileusless and you may feel free to identify them as such should you see one and be able to tell it from a crow or whatever.

Appalachian Winter, the newest book by Pennsylvania author Marcia Bonta, is now available. Many of us have met Ms. Bonta personally and enjoyed the programs she has done for SRAS. Please see page 9 for more information and an order form.

Reminder:
Birdseed pick-up week at Agway is March 7 to March 12.
PSO Annual Meeting, Clarion, PA

SRAS will be hosting the Pennsylvania Society for Ornithology (PSO) Annual Meeting the weekend of May 20-22, 2005, at the Clarion Holiday Inn.

The meeting begins on Friday evening with registration and a social gathering. This will be your opportunity to sign up for Saturday and Sunday morning field trips, which will depart at 6:30 each morning from the Holiday Inn.

Field trips include:
- **Buttermilk Hill Nature Sanctuary** (BHNS) is a 460 acre, predominantly wooded nature sanctuary near Sugar Creek. **Leader - owner Jerry Stanley.**
- **Buzzard Swamp**, near Marienville is a mixture of mature evergreens, open areas, hedgerows, and ponds. **Leader - Deuane Hoffman of Central PA.**
- **Clear Creek State Forest** (CCSF) is an out-of-the-way 10,000 acre mostly upland forest in northern Jefferson County on the southern edge of the Allegheny High Plateau. **Leader - Ron Montgomery.**
- **Cook Forest State Park** is a National Natural Landmark, famous for its stands of old growth forest, and the home of 12 record trees. **Leader - Dale Luthringer.**
- **Mt. Zion, (Pinney Tract)** an IBA, is a reclaimed strip mine, known for nesting Grasshopper, Henslow’s and Savannah Sparrows. **Leader – Mike Leahy.**

Due to popular demand, this outing will also be offered on Friday at 1:00 pm.
- **Oil Creek State Park**, in “The Valley That Changed the World” is another beautiful spot for warblers in May. **Leader – Gary Edwards.**
- **The Allegheny National Forest** includes 513,000 acres of northern hardwood on the Allegheny High Plateau. **Leaders – Flo & Jim McGuire.**

Saturday Afternoon there will be several short programs:
- **Research on the Allegheny Plateau** by Scott H. Stoleson;
- **The 1970s Spruce Budworm Infestation and Birds** by Nick Bolgiano;
- **Monitoring Pennsylvania Biodiversity: Reasons, Results, and Rewards of the 2nd PBBA** by Robert S. Mulvihill;
- **PORC report** - Nick Pulcinella of the Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee will give a short report of their activities.

The banquet and presentation of the Earl Poole Award and another special award will be held on Saturday evening.

PSO member Doug Gross will be our keynote speaker, at the banquet. His topic is **Northern Saw-whet Owl Research.** Doug is a PGC Wildlife Biologist - Endangered Species Specialist.

There will be several vendors at the Holiday Inn during the weekend:
- Aden Troyer, Lost Creek Optics
- Frank Haas, Birdscreens
- Gil Twiest, SRAS member and award-winning photographer
- Carol McDonald, local nature artist
- Paluh’s Whitetail Ridge Gallery and Framing from Tionesta, PA
- John Karian, nature photographer
- Jerry Lucot, harnesses for camera/binoculars

SRAS will be selling raffle tickets for a beautiful print that was given to us by PA Audubon on our 20th anniversary last year.

PSO will again be offering a Silent Auction, which has been a popular activity. If you have any bird-related items that you would like to donate to this PSO fund-raiser, please notify Shonah Hunter at SHunter@lhum.edu. Used items such as old nature books have been popular. The donor can specify an asking price for each item.

(continued on p. 10)
APPALACHIAN WINTER
Marcia Bonta

Winter is the season that most tests our mettle. There are the obvious challenges of the weather—freezing rain, wind chill, deep snow, dangerous ice—but also the psychological burdens of waiting for spring and the enduring often false starts that accompany its eventual return.

On the surface, perhaps, winter might seem an odd season for a nature book, but there is plenty of beauty and life in the woods if only we know where to look. The stark, white landscape sparkles in the sunshine and glows beneath the moon on crisp, clear nights; the opening up of the forest makes it easy to see long distances; birds, some of which can be easily seen only in winter, flock to feeders; and animals—even those that should be hibernating—make surprise visits from time to time.

Appalachian Winter offers acclaimed naturalist Marcia Bonta's view of one season, as experienced on and around her 650-acre home on the westernmost ridge of the hill-and-valley landscape that dominates central Pennsylvania. Written in the style of a journal, each day's entry focuses on her walks and rambles through the woods and fields that she has known and loved for over thirty years.

This is the fourth and final volume of Bonta's seasonal meditations on the natural history of the northern Appalachian Mountains. Her gentle, charming accounts of changing weather and of the struggles faced by plants, animals, and insects breathe new warmth into the coldest months of the year.

Marcia Bonta is the author of nine books, including Outbound Journeys in Pennsylvania, and more than four hundred articles for a wide variety of regional and national publications. A popular lecturer, whose column "The Naturalist's Eye" appears regularly in Pennsylvania Game News, she lives in Tyrone, in central Pennsylvania.
PSO Meeting at Clarion (Continued from p. 8)

PSO T-shirts and patches will also be for sale. The T-shirts will be available in light blue this year.

The PSO Annual Meeting is always a wonderful opportunity to meet other birders from around the state, to put faces to names you may have seen in the PA Birds journal or listserv, to rejoin old friends, and to bird in new areas. We hope you will join us!

The vendors will be available to the public in the Holiday Inn foyer. Many of them will be set up on Friday evening, and all will be available on Saturday afternoon.

You must belong to PSO to join in the field trips, Friday’s business meeting, or Saturday afternoon’s programs.

However, as a non-member, you may register for “banquet only” – to attend the Saturday night banquet and awards presentation and hear the keynote speaker.

Future Programs & Events

April 11 – Dave Brinker, Northern Goshawks
May 9 – Membership Celebration, Timberwolf Lodge
May 20-22 – PSO Annual Meeting in Clarion

Hosting our upcoming meetings

March – Fran and Jack Williams
May – Kathy Pokrifka